

## July 12, 2009 - Local Company Improving Military Vehicles

The Herald Standard

[www.heraldstandard.com](http://www.heraldstandard.com)

Local company improving military vehicles

By Christine Haines

July 12, 2009

REDSTONE TWP. - A local company is working to make armored Humvees lighter and safer for U.S. troops.

Shumar Industries is producing the upper portion of the gun turrets for the military vehicles, as well as a Humvee rollover simulator used to train troops to get out of the vehicles safely after they have rolled. The simulator is known as a Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer, or HEAT unit. Shumar is the only maker of the simulator that includes a gun turret.

It is currently producing the specialty training equipment for various branches of the military through Defense Department contracts that U.S. Rep John P. Murtha, D-Johnstown, helped the company to obtain. Murtha recently toured the facility and was impressed with the Humvee rollover training equipment.

"This is real important," Murtha said. "I see these guys in the hospital. The biggest injuries come when these things turn over, catch fire and the men have a hard time getting out."

Approximately 7,000 military personnel are trained each month in the HEAT units.

The door on an armored Humvee weighs 385 pounds. Tow loops are built into the doors so a cable can be attached and the door opened by another vehicle.

Jeff Yates, program manager at Shumar, said the rollover simulator teaches gunners how to safely disconnect from their harnesses and get out of the gun turret before they are crushed if their Humvee is flipped over.

"It's actually saved lives already," Yates said.

Shumar is also developing armored gun turrets for Humvees, working on ways to decrease the weight while improving safety. Shumar started making the turrets with a bulletproof plastic that was made in Blairsville and coated in Kansas to prevent scratching. While the thick layers of plastic stop armor-piercing bullets, equal to the protection of an inch and a half of steel, the final product was too heavy for the vehicles.

The company is now working to reduce the weight of the turrets 30 percent by switching to a ballistics crystal product produced in Washington, Pa., that offers at least as much protection, company officials said. The company is also in the final stages of producing a prototype anti-sniper turret that will be used in Afghanistan.

Steel armor providing protection equal to the ballistics crystal would weigh 70 pounds per square foot. The ballistics crystal weighs just 22 pounds per square foot, Yates said.

"These guys are innovative and they fashion it quickly, which is why we deal with them more and more," Murtha said of the Brier Hill company.

Yates said Shumar tested some Israeli armor last year, then lightened it by 40 percent and made them repairable in the field. The bulletproof windows can be replaced just by removing six bolts. Yates said Shumar also improved on the specifications, which only called for the turrets to protect against regular rifle bullets. Yates said the windows on the turrets are now more bulletproof than the metal on the vehicle. The company is also looking at ways to improve the armor for the vehicles.

"You guys have something unique here. You can save me money, save taxpayers' money. You're making a lighter vehicle with the highest possible armor," Murtha said.

"We have to plan ahead to the best threat, not what's happening now," Yates said. "They can get hold of armor-piercing rounds the same as we can."

Eli Shumar, president of the company, said the firm has 99 employees working on defense contracts and the company's original product, mining equipment. Two years ago the company had about 69 employees.

"If we get some of these contracts, we can add another 25 to 50 jobs," Shumar said.